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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to distill and develop the findings of the UNESCO European Workshop on "The Impact on Curriculum Development and Educational Methods of the Information Conveyed by the Mass Communication Media," held in November 1986. The paper is organized around the five main areas of discussion at the conference: (1) the nature of media "impact"; (2) the impact of media on the curriculum: the current situation; (3) specialist and non-specialist uses of the media in Curriculum Development; (4) the impact of media on pedagogic methods; and (5) linking the worlds of media and education. Each section deals with the main issues and arguments raised during the conference and ends with a number of concrete proposals for future action. (Seventeen notes are included.) (SR)

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Division of Educational Sciences, Contents and Methods of Education

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Final Report of the UNESCO European Workshop
Held at Tutzing, Federal Republic of Germany
17-20 November 1986

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Preface

This paper attempts to distil and develop the findings of the UNESCO European Workshop held at Tutzing near Munich, 17-20 November 1986 on The impact on Curriculum Development and Educational Methods of the Information conveyed by the Mass Communication Media. The paper is organised around the five main areas of discussion at the conference:

1. The nature of media 'impact'
2. The impact of media on the curriculum: the current situation
3. Specialist and non-specialist uses of the media in Curriculum Development
4. The impact of media on pedagogic methods
5. Linking the worlds of media and education

Each section deals with the main issues and arguments raised during the conference and ends with a number of concrete proposals for future action.

The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Unesco.

The Impact of Mass Communication Media on Curriculum Development and Educational Methods

1. The Nature of Media "Impact"

Any discussion of media "impact" must begin with a theoretical clearing of the ground. This is necessary given the enormous amount of empirical research which has attempted to gauge the effects of mass communication media. It is generally agreed that, in spite of its volume, effects research has yielded few reliable conclusions. A number of reasons for this may be briefly suggested:

1. The familiar difficulties of separating out the precise influence of the media from a range of other social influences (family, peer-group, social class, etc).

2. The difficulties of separating media products from the social, legal, historical and economic contexts in which they are produced, circulated, transmitted and consumed.

3. The problems faced by much psychological research in attempting to draw conclusions about human behaviour on the basis of controlled laboratory experiments, and in attempting to isolate psychological phenomena from their social contexts.[1]

4. The frequent use of over-simplistic "hyperdermic" models of communication in which individuals are hypothesised as committing acts of aggression because, for example, they have seen them on television. Such linear models all too often serve the purpose of scapegoating the media in order to distract attention from more deeply-rooted social injustices.[2]

5. The inevitably "media-centred" nature of most mass communications research which privileges from the outset the role of media within the research design.[3]

6. Finally, it should be observed that, historically, the key objective of much mass communications research has been not so much to increase understanding of the complexity of media effects, but to increase the ability of those who controlled the media (either politically, economically or professionally) to monitor, affect and even manipulate media audiences. Effects research has frequently taken for granted and

sought to make more effective a top-down, one-way, essentially undemocratic model of media communication.

All of this is not to suggest that communication media have an unprovable or negligible impact upon their audiences. It is, rather, to argue that more subtle distinctions, and more sophisticated conceptual tools, will be necessary if we are to begin to make sense of the impact which mass communications media have upon educational institutions and their clients. All members of the UNESCO workshop were agreed that the audio-visual media were powerful "alternative teachers" and that their content constituted a "parallel curriculum" to that of the school.

Before examining the implications of this for educational institutions, however, the workshop attempted to define more precisely some of the problems associated with media influence under three headings:

a) Problems associated with defining both the volume and complexity of patterns of media consumption.

b) Problems of assessing the impact of media content.

c) Problems associated with media reception.

a) **The Volume and Complexity of Media Consumption**

Research which demonstrates that in most European countries children between the ages of five and fourteen spend more time watching television than they do in the classroom is now widely known amongst teachers and educationalists.[4] More significant even than this, however, are the figures which are available for the consumption of all of the audio-visual media. One researcher[5], for example, has estimated that the average adult in one European country spends as much as seventy-five hours each week with television, radio, newspapers and magazines. This figure draws attention to the complexity with which the media both interact with one another and integrate themselves into the pattern of our daily lives.

For we considerably under-estimate the impact of the media if we consider only those occasions on which we give them our fullest attention. There are many occasions when we engage with media as a secondary activity, when we have the

radio or television on whilst doing something else. There are even tertiary uses of the media as when we listen to a radio or television with half an ear whilst we eat a meal and hold a conversation. But the real significance of these different levels of media use is that they are frequently integrated not simply with other activities but with one another. Primary, secondary and tertiary activities may all be media-related. Hence the high figures of weekly media consumption. Hence, too, the fact that the everyday experience of both teachers and students alike is saturated by media no matter how resistant they may believe themselves to be to their influence.

b) **Media Content**

Empirical analysis of media content has severe limitations. It can be useful to know, for example, the precise number of women, or ethnic minority representatives who appear on mainstream television. But crucially we need to interpret the contexts within which they appear in order to understand their likely impact. We need to understand more precisely how the media provide us not simply with information about the world but with ways of understanding and making sense of it. We need to pay particular attention, that is, to the inevitably selective nature of media representations, to the ideological power of the very 'naturalness' of media constructions, to the taken-for-granted assumptions of media convention and forms, to the media's agenda-setting functions (their marking of particular ideas and events as significant simply by reporting them), and to the media's amplification of dominant discourses or ways of making sense of the world.

We need, too, in considering the influence of media content, to look at the impact upon media content of such major determinants as owners and controllers, advertisers, the government, the state and the law and dominant information sources. We need to see, that is, that the media are frequently not primary definers of "reality" at all but relayers of definitions, agendas and discourses which have their origins elsewhere, in the major political, juridical, military, economic and civil institutions of society.

c) **Media Reception**

Finally, it is inaccurate to regard audiences as simply passive receivers of media content.[6] Audiences, rather, are active and ceaseless producers of meaning. The media may offer to their audiences a diversity of content and a range of positions from which to make sense of it. But these positions are then worked upon by audiences. They are often disputed, argued with, ignored,

misunderstood or modified and generally subjected to complex processes of negotiation, acceptance and rejection. Audiences - of children no less than adults - are makers of meaning who integrate (or decide not to integrate) media content into their own ways of making sense of the world.

In considering the impact of media upon children and students, then, we need to be aware

- of the dangers of inferring media impact from media content
- that media content will be treated and used in different ways by different audiences
- that audiences of children, no less than audiences of adults, may be segmented by such characteristics as gender, age, class, ethnicity, education, (parental) income etc, and that these characteristics are likely to have some influence upon media tastes and perceptions.

If we are to move beyond undifferentiated and monolithic notions of media impact upon children then we need to determine

what kind of use (primary, secondary, tertiary) is being made of
what kind of media (TV, radio, magazines, pop-music) using
What kind of decoding (accepted, rejected, negotiated), of
what kind of content (fantasy, 'realistic' fiction, propaganda, factual representations) by
what kind of young people (pre-school or young adults? boys or girls? black, brown or white? middle or working-class? affluent or poor? rural or urban?)

PROPOSALS

1. That institutions of media research seriously consider the possibilities of collaborative small-scale research with practising teachers in order to monitor current patterns of media usage by specific target groups of young people.

   This proposal reflects our belief that

   (i) frequent small-scale research is a more sensitive instrument than large-scale projects for monitoring often rapid changes in young people's media tastes,

(ii) that research on media usage needs to be targeted much more precisely upon specific user-groups than it has been in the past,

(iii) that 'decentralised' research, conducted in partnership with teachers, is more likely to produce findings of interest and value to teachers, as well as to both reflect and validate their own classroom experience and expertise.

2. That research institutions should establish and co-ordinate data-bases upon this kind of small-scale research, such data-bases to be easily accessible to practising teachers.

2. The Impact of Media on the Curriculum: the Current Situation

How are the media currently used in schools and what are the possibilities and limitations of such usage? In attempting to answer this question the workshop discussed current media usage under the following headings:

a) educational broadcasting
b) the media as aids to learning
c) the media as disseminators of knowledge and experience
d) uses of the media within media education programmes.

a) Educational Broadcasting

In almost all countries educational broadcasting enjoys low status within broadcasting institutions. Comparatively few resources are allocated to it and production units are often understaffed and underfunded. The workshop warmly welcomed the increasing number of educational broadcasting series about the media, but looking not very far ahead it is clear that the very concept of educational broadcasting is likely to be under some threat as public service television companies expand their programmes into daytime in order to face de-regulated competition from 24 hour DBS and cable stations.

In this situation it would be of immense value if educational and broadcasting institutions could collaborate in integrating the enormously wide range of all broadcast material into an effective pedagogy either for teaching about the media specifically or for teaching other more traditional areas of the curriculum. The workshop found the experience of Channel Four in the UK particularly illuminating in this respect.

From its inception Channel Four had appointed an Educational Liaison Officer, a unique post, since the Channel does not involve itself with any closed, formal educational programming aimed at school, college or university students. Its schedules do include, however, a growing amount of open and informal educational broadcasting which is neither narrowly targeted on a particular group of institutionalised learners nor predicated upon a pre-ordained formal curriculum.

Co-ordinated out of the Education Liaison Office are

(i) Booklets, leaflets and factsheets which are commissioned to accompany programmes from such diverse programme areas as sport, history, news and current affairs programmes, education, the arts, drama and light entertainment. The publications provide a bridge for viewers who have enjoyed a programme and want to take its contents further themselves. How will they remember it all? Where should they go for help? What else can they read, hear or watch?

(ii) Around 20 off-air telephone referral services a year, which allow viewers with a problem or a need to talk to somebody after the programme and be informed about a source of help near their home.

(iii) A magazine - SEE 4 - which is distributed three times a year to 180,000 viewers through adult education centres, public libraries, teacher centres, voluntary organisations, etc. SEE 4 gives programme information <u>in advance</u> to those who want to learn through television.

(iv) A licensing scheme for copying programmes off-air in educational settings and a scheme for the non-theatrical low cost sale of videos to educators of all kinds.

(v) Plans for follow up activities of all kinds in all parts of the county including exhibitions, conferences, viewing groups and meetings between programme makers, viewers and educators.

<u>PROPOSAL</u>

We believe it to be an especially appropriate time for television companies to rethink their general educational strategies. We were particularly favourably

disposed to the idea of the appointment by broadcasting institutions of co-ordinating officers with a wide brief to co-ordinate activities over the whole of a company's output.

Co-ordinating officers would provide the broadcasting institutions with a much needed ear to the outside world. They would promote early contact between broadcasting organisations and agencies and groups already in the field. They would help to place available expertise at the disposal of programme makers, and enable broadcasters to maximise the effectiveness of a wide range of materials currently transmitted.

They would be involved in the provision of support material, available both at the time of transmission and before it and would help make the transition from viewing to participating in an already established group as easy and efficient as possible. The creation of such a co-ordinator role within TV companies would, we think, be widely welcomed. We recognise that teachers and particularly media educators would be but one of many groups wishing to call upon the services of such a person. But the effective co-ordination of educational and broadcasting resources could bring tremendous benefits to television companies, to formal and informal educational providers, and above all to viewers of all ages.

(b) The Media as Aids to Learning

The view that the media can and should be used as aids to learning, and that the media offer a relatively unhampered passage to experience continues to have perhaps the widest currency of all in classrooms throughout the world. At its simplest this may involve nothing more than the illustrative use of images in textbooks or of photographs, slides and films across the curriculum. At its limits it is a full-blown technocratic ideology in which effective teaching becomes synonymous with the ability to 'match' pedagogic aims to the appropriate technology. Educational technologists are available in many educational institutions to give material support both to teaching staff and to this use of the media, and they, in turn, are supported in many countries by well-established professional associations, networks and publications. The use of media as aids to learning and of media technology as a servicing agent does tend in practice to be linked with a view of the media as neutral transmitters of ideas and information, and also to the making of quite rigid distinctions between the educational uses of the media and their prolific informal

non-educational use. This dichotomy is linked, in turn, to a further and equally problematic distinction between the media's informational and entertainment functions.

(c) The media as disseminators of knowledge and experience

This view of the media actively challenges the distinctions (made above) between educational and non-educational uses of the media and their 'reality' and 'escapist' functions. Whilst still remaining within the 'media-as-aids-to-learning' paradigm, this approach recognises the dangerously wide gap which can exist between what is often the hermetically sealed world of the classroom, and the environment, rich in educational possibilities, to which pupils are exposed out of it. It attempts to close this gap by making practical links between schools and out-of-school educational influences, amongst them the media. In the words of a UNESCO paper the teacher should possess

> 'The ability to create, coordinate and manage learning situations which do not originate and do not terminate exclusively inside the school premises, but which draw upon all kinds of contribution, stimulation and information deriving from an extremely varied and diversified cultural and technological environment.'

In some ways this represents a refreshing extension and liberalisation of the media-as-visual-aids position, particularly in its emphasis upon the primacy of the learner's experiences of the media, and upon the implications of these experiences for formal learning. Yet in conceptualising the media as part of the 'environment', and in linking the media with other social influences upon the child, this view has not yet moved beyond the idea that the media are relatively unproblematic sources of 'experience'. It is a view to which the media education movement offers an explicit challenge.

(d) Uses of the media within Media Education

Whatever else it signifies the term 'media education' indicates a movement away from the idea that the media are simply means of attaining particular educational goals. They are, rather, thought to be eminently worthy of study in their own right. Precisely how the media might best be studied, however, has been a matter of continuing debate for the past fifty years.

During that time the term has embraced an astonishing variety of theories and pedagogic practices based upon a number of different assumptions about the media. Some of these may be briefly enumerated:

(i) The Media as 'problems' or diseases, harmful influences against which children need the protection of an 'inoculative' media education. Through media education children would be able to discriminate between worthwhile or 'high' culture, and a corrupting and debasing 'popular' culture. This once dominant paradigm of media education is by no means defunct. It continues to have considerable influence in many classrooms (particularly, for example, in the teaching of advertising) where it may happily coexist with approaches generally more sympathetic to modern media of communication.

(ii) The media as popular art forms, worthy of serious study and appreciation in their own right. 'Discrimination' in this paradigm is to be exercised not against the media, but within them, in order to encourage students to distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' films, television, newspapers, etc. In practice this view of the media has led to a number of difficulties in the classroom. It privileged the study of film (the one popular medium to have any serious credentials as art) at a time when cinema-going had fewer claims to being considered a genuinely popular pursuit than at any other time in its history. It contributed to the relative neglect of TV and press studies. It was quite unable to establish widely agreed criteria for evaluating the media. It led to doubts about the appropriateness of applying aesthetic criteria to much media output (eg soap-operas, photo-journalism, news broadcasts). And above all it tended to hold in low esteem those popular media genres and products with which children and students identified most closely.

(iii) The media as representational and symbolic systems or consciousness industries

"The first of the great cultural functions of the modern media" according to Stuart Hall is "the provision and the selective construction of social knowledge."[8] The media provide not simply information about the world but ways of seeing and understanding it. Hall's emphasis upon "selective construction" draws attention to the function of the media as signifying practices which deal with representations rather than reflections of reality. The media, that

is, are symbolic systems which need to be actively and critically read rather than passively accepted as substitutes for experience.

The media are also industries which are linked, through their structures of ownership and control, both with one another, and with a vast range of service and consumer industries. Note Hall's emphasis above upon the media's construction of "social knowledge". The media provide the means, in increasingly segregated and fragmented societies, by which we make sense of many groups, classes, institutions and practices of which we may have little first-hand knowledge. And they also provide us with representations and images which enable us to make sense of society as a whole.[9]

It is in this sense that the media may be thought of as consciousness industries which possess rather complex sets of relationships with the states, juridical-political systems, and civil institutions of the cultures of which they are a part.[10] The idea that the media are consciousness industries has called into question the common belief that the media's prime functions are to provide news, entertainment or information for their audiences. Their chief function as industries is to produce audiences for sale to advertisers.[11] And their principal objective as consciousness industries is to produce particular kinds of audience consciousness. "In a fundamental sense," in Dallas Smythe's words, "control over the means of informing people is the basis of political power ... As Alfred Sauvy put it, the power to build television stations is like the medieval power to build castles along the Rhine."[12] It is now widely recognised that considering the media as representational systems and as consciousness industries offer fruitful lines of enquiry for the study of media within educational institutions. The principal theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of these approaches to the media are considered in the following section.

PROPOSALS:

1. We consider that the considerable impact which the media currently have upon the curriculum raises as many problems as it solves when the role of the media is thought to be that of neutral providersof information. Accordingly we call upon teacher-training institutions to consider the provision both of specialist courses in media education, and of a media education component within the training of teachers of all subjects.

2. We would wish to encourage, too, the use of media as tools for creative expression across the curriculum. We would like to see pupils and students in all subjects presenting their work in audio-visual as well as print forms, wherever possible for consumption by real audiences. This proposal also has direct implications for teacher-training of course.

3. In almost all countries the use of most broadcast material for educational purposes is limited by the laws on copyright. We recommend that there should be no copyright on the use of any broadcast material for educational purposes. The reform of the copyright laws in this direction would have the advantage of releasing into educational systems expensive and much-needed resources at no additional cost to national governments or taxpayers and we would encourage educational groups in all countries to lobby for such a development.

3. Specialist and Non-specialist Uses of the Media in Curriculum Development

(a) Media Education Courses

There is a first principle of media education, as we have described it, a principle from which all else flows: the principle of non-transparency. It is a principle which insists that the media are involved in something rather more than acting as a window on the world or as a mirror to external reality. It draws a fundamental distinction between reality and representations of that reality, between images and their referents, between signifiers and signified. Media teachers today talk incessantly not about, say, men, women, football, Africa or prisons but about <u>representations</u> of these things. The concept of repres[illegible]ation, indeed, has become a kind of professional pun - "re-presentation".

A number of other areas of interest spring quite logically from that central concern with questions of representation although it is important to see these areas not as tightly defined categories but as major themes within media teaching which feed into one another in rather complex ways. We can delineate four such areas:

(i) First of all it is important that media education should investigate the origins and sources of media representations. Why are the media as they are? Who controls, produces and influences the images that we see? This is not an easy area to teach, because whilst there are

some basic distinctions which can be made - between public service and commercial media for example - one is attempting, in the long term, to provide pupils and students with a grasp of the rather intricate web of influences affecting, say, a particular TV programme. It is often most useful to teach about topical and controversial media issues as they arise in order to draw attention to the precise influence of owners, advertisers, the government, the state, or the legal constraints surrounding the media in any particular case.

(ii) The second area for investigation within media education is media rhetoric - the techniques used by the media to construct meaning. On the whole this is familiar territory for media teachers. It covers such things as visual and sound editing, the role of commentary, the inevitably selective nature of sounds and images, the use of set-ups, the structure of narratives and so on.

What is involved here is a reversal of the process through which a medium selects and edits material into a polished, continuous and seamless flow. It involves the deconstruction of media texts by breaking through their surface to reveal the rhetorical techniques through which meanings are produced. It is an important step in moving from subordination to a text to critical liberation from it. And it is an important element in both the analysis of media images, and of practical media work in which pupils can try out the effects of particular rhetorical techniques for themselves.

(iii) The third area of investigation in media education is that of ideology. To a large degree the ideological power of the media resides in the ability of those who control and work in them to pass off what are inevitably selective and partial representations as true, rational, authentic and necessary. Not constructions but simply part of the way things are. It is media education's staunch refusal of the naturalness of the image that makes it an essential democratic tool, one of the few counterbalances which ordinary citizens have against the ideological power of those who have easy access to the media.

Our interest in ideology signals our belief that communication issues and questions of value are inextricably intertwined. It is

characteristic of media education that it moves from the game show, the newspaper photograph or the clothes of the newsreader towards a consideration of the often large and significant ideas which underpin them - into a consideration, for instance, of gender stereotyping, or of what counts as knowledge, or of the relative importance attached to competition and co-operation.

Ultimately what is being explored here are questions of power. Whose interests are being served by these images and ideas? Out of what sets of material interests and conditions do they spring? Who has the power to define and who is always defined? Who gets represented and in what ways? And who rarely gets represented? Who is allowed to speak about the world as they know and understand it, and whose words and experiences are invariably framed for us by others? How is power distributed in our society? Who has access to it and who does not? These are questions which are inevitably going to be raised when the media are read as representational systems.

(iv) Audience

The fourth area of investigation is one which has traditionally been much neglected by media educators, the audience. Media education in the past has been predominantly based upon the beliefs that textual meanings are produced by authors (writers/directors/producers), are inherent within texts, and give themselves up only to experienced and sensitive readers. If you did not belong to this latter category then you were likely to be thought of as uncritical and passive. During the past four or five years, however, there has been a mini-explosion of research activity about media audiences.[13] What this has essentially revealed is the inaccuracy of regarding audiences as simply receivers of meanings determined elsewhere. Audiences, rather, are active and ceaseless producers of meaning. As we have already suggested, television, for example, may offer to its audiences a range and diversity of positions from which to view and understand experience. But these positions are then worked upon by audiences, andgenerally subjected to a complex process of negotiation, acceptance or rejection.

The implications of this research for media education are important. For children are meaning-makers too. In the past media teachers have perhaps paid too much attention to the text's immanent meanings, and

too little to what the child was bringing to the text. Where we have sought homogeneity of response we need now to encourage diversity. Whether we are with young people in the home or in the classroom we need to give them as much encouragement and help as possible in the task of working upon the media for themselves - of negotiating meaning, of arguing back, of considering alternatives and of making sense of the media's values in terms of their own.

There is one other aspect of work on audiences that is of great importance. As we have already suggested, audiences are the media's chief product and one of the most important functions of contemporary media is to segment audiences into attractive job lots for sale and delivery to advertisers. That is how commercial media make their money and their ability to perform that function is the single criterion by which they either succeed or fail.

Many media educators still tend to have a somewhat innocent view of the media, and as a result are in danger of passing on to their students a one-dimensional picture of what the media do. It is clear that media teachers will have to move away from a model which sees the media as being essentially providers of information or entertainment, with advertising acting as a kind of benevolent philanthropist keeping down the price of newspapers or providing us with free television. Rather the content of the media constitutes the "bait" (what Canadian critic Dallas Smythe calls the "free lunch") by means of which the audience product is created. The simplest and most effective way of keying children and students into this way of understanding the media is to let them see any media trade journal or promotional video aimed at advertisers. Let them see how media organisations advertise themselves in these journals and the extent to which, in the articles, audiences are treated and analysed quite unashamedly as commodities.

CRITICAL PRACTICE

The Workshop was also concerned to emphasize that media education will involve, at every stage and in every phase, a great deal of practical work. Media education is essentially active and participatory. It is about doing things. For if children are to understand media texts as constructions, then it will obviously be helpful if they have first-hand experience of the construction

process from the inside. A good deal of this practical work will be very simple and low-tech. It may involve manipulating images, writing commentaries, editing news stories, experimenting with different kinds of interviewing techniques, and the like. Some practical work may call for the use of more sophisticated equipment, but even here there will often be an element of playfulness and experimentation involved. Primary school children may make their own pop videos, or simulate the making of a radio news programme, but these activities will rarely be seen as ends in themselves. Media education always involves more than a series of purely technical operations, always more than the reproduction of dominant media forms. It will involve experimenting with alternatives, playing with conventions, breaking the codes. Media education is concerned to encourage, in the happy phrase of one media teacher, both "practical criticism and critical practice".[14]

CRITICAL AUTONOMY

Media education has one other very important objective, a higher objective than that aimed for by most other curriculum subjects. Within media education it simply is not good enough for pupils to reproduce ideas or information supplied to them by the teacher. It is not even good enough for teachers to encourage pupils' own critical insights in the classroom, important though this may be. The really important and difficult task of the media teacher is to develop in pupils enough self-confidence and critical maturity to be able to apply critical judgements to media texts which they have not yet seen, but which they are likely to encounter in the future. The acid test of any media education programme is the extent to which pupils are critical in their own use and understanding of the media when the teacher is not there. The primary objective is not simply critical awareness and understanding, it is critical autonomy.

This is an important aim with profound implications for course content, teaching methodology and methods of evaluation. In the classroom it is always going to be necessary to move beyond the particularities of a specific text or issue towards those general principles which have relevance to the analysis of similar texts and issues. The effectiveness of any media teaching (and media "learning" by students) can only be assessed by the students' ability to transfer and apply what they know to new situations. The

implications of this for teaching methodologies appropriate to media education will be considered in section 4 of this paper.

PROPOSALS

1. We recommend that media education specialists give the fullest consideration to ways in which their courses can be taught in rigorous and disciplined ways which avoid the dangers of fragmentation (ie via the teaching of discrete media) and an undue reliance upon specific subject content. In particular it is important for all media teachers to arrive at their own answers to the following questions:

   (i) What constitutes, precisely, the field of study for media education?

   (ii) What kind of epistemological framework can give coherence to the study of diverse media?

   (iii) Around which key ideas and concepts can the study of the media best be organised?

   (iv) Do media studies possess a characteristic mode of enquiry? Or an appropriate pedagogy?

   This paper makes some attempt to answer these important questions. We believe it to be more important that media educators should reach their own conclusions on these questions than that they agree with our own.

2. In order to broaden their own and their students' understanding of the media we suggest that media teachers consider the routine use of media trade journals as important resources for learning about the media. Such journals tend to be lively, informative and disarmingly frank about their commercial relationship with media audiences. We would like to see media trade journals made more readily available in educational libraries and resource centres. For their part the journals themselves might seriously consider the potentialities of the, till now, relatively neglected educational market. The setting of concessionary subscription rates to educational institutions, for example, might prove beneficial to all parties.

(b) <u>Media Education Across the Curriculum</u>

The Workshop discussed three levels at which media material may be

integrated into the teaching of all mainstream curriculum subjects:

Level One: Using Media Knowledge

The argument for integrating media 'knowledge' more effectively into classroom teaching has moved some way beyond 'the media as visual aids' or 'the teacher as technocrat' models cited earlier in this paper. It stems from a general recognition that the media can be superb resources which teachers of all subjects might use as a matter of routine in their lessons. The argument is that the media are rather like magnificent encyclopaedias, which, in an age of increased pressures on educational resources, can be used by teachers to make their work more efficient and effective. What this use of media knowledge raises, as always, is precisely the status of the knowledge which is being (perhaps unquestioningly) transmitted to students. The media encylopaedia may not be a very reliable source of information.

Level Two: Critical Approaches to Media Knowledge

In most curriculum areas at least some work has been done by enterprising individuals and institutions in encouraging students to look critically at media knowledge and representations. A good deal of progress has been achieved in a subject like Geography for instance. Images in geography textbooks have been analysed in terms of their sexist and Euro-centric assumptions. There has been a systematic analysis of geographical films produced by large transnational corporations such as Shell. There have been studies of media stereotypes of rural and urban landscapes. And when geographers have looked at the possibilities of classroom use of major international TV series such as The Heart of the Dragon (on China) or David Attenborough's The Living Planet they have looked not simply at geographical issues but raised in a very direct way questions of narrative structure, audience pleasure, programme economics, the use of set-up situations, the use of music, and the distortion and manufacture of sound.[15]

Even in a subject like Geography, however, where so much invaluable work has been done, an essential point about the nature of "media knowledge" remains to be met. It is this. The model of the media as a kind of encyclopaedia, even one of dubious accuracy, is not at all appropriate. Children do not go to the media just to seek out educationally beneficial material. They do not use it as they might a reference book. They use the media, as we all do, much more casually, for relaxation, and

enjoyment. What they are likely to pick up from their uses of television are, along with many interesting and stimulating ideas, all kinds of misconceptions, prejudices, stereotypes and assumptions about all kinds of subjects from all kinds of programmes. Television is not an encyclopaedia. It is a kind of popular and often bizarre alternative curriculum, the impact of which all teachers will need to take into account if they are to teach effectively.

Level Three: Using Popular Media Material

Teachers of all subjects will only begin to make the fullest use of media knowledge when they take seriously the impact of popular media representation upon their subjects and its content. To stay with Geography for a moment, research by Nightingale demonstrated that television was as likely to be cited by school children as a source of information about other countries as parents or school. In addition

> "In relation to particular important countries (the USA and USSR) it (TV) was cited almost exclusively."

Further "the reality of the TV world was believed to be a true representation of the USA", a fact worth thinking about when this "reality" is that of Dallas, Dynasty or Miami Vice[16]

Clearly there are exciting possibilities here for the geographical study of what some writers have called "image regions" - those popular images which we immediately conjure up at the mention of a particular region, country or even continent (France, India, Africa, etc). Youngs, in an extended case-study, has, for example, considered the USA ante-bellum South as "a state of mind" rather than "a condition of land". Using the novel and film of Gone with the Wind, as well as more recent romantic fiction, he compares the dominant popular images (of a land of large cotton plantations owned by a slave-owning aristocracy living in manorial splendour) with the actuality of the ante-bellum South (in which the leading crop was not cotton, but corn; smallholdings were more numerous than plantations; 75% of whites did not own slaves; a typical planter's house was 'just a box', and the planters themselves were not aristocrats but farm labourers and small farmers).[17] Clearly there is scope here for similar work in schools in which media images are compared with geographical realities. How do the images of Dallas in Dallas, of Denver

in Dynasty or Miami in Miami Vice compare with the socio-economic realities of those cities?

Other geography teachers have looked at the generalised images of rural and urban environments which appear in TV advertisements, soap-operas, films, posters, coffee-table books and other popular media. Often functioning as natural backdrops to their ostensible subjects such images crystallise enormously powerful ideological values. The countryside, for example, is often depicted as a place to be admired, visited and idealised, a repository of innocent pastoral values, quaint customs, traditional crafts, and stability and order. What are persistently absent from such rural images are the realities of rural poverty, exploitation, bad housing, unemployment and poor communication. It is clear that questions of representation have as important a role to play in the development of a critical geographical education as they have in relation to the specialist study of the media themselves.

Further possibilities for the integration of media knowledge into other curriculum subjects may be briefly suggested:

History

- the study of early visual media (eg tapestries, engravings, portraits, early photographs)
- the assessment of historical evidence available through the media of contemporary photography, film, newspapers and broadcasting
- the sequencing of historical visual evidence in its correct chronological order
- the accuracy and use of representations of the past in the popular media (eg in TV and film costume dramas, nostalgic advertisements, etc)
- representations of history itself (eg as a unitary, one-dimensional 'truth') in, for example, educational programmes, quiz shows, etc
- the compilation of oral histories via the audio-visual media

These kind of activities should sharpen awareness of the inevitably selective and partial nature of all historical representations, and of the close parallels which exist between the dominant practices of the media and of the historian. Apart from their importance as sources of historical material the media may also be used as modes of presentation within history lessons through the imaginative use of newspaper, radio and TV simulations in the reporting of historical events and the assessment of historical evidence.

Science

- the image, function and status of science and scientists in the media (eg the use of scientists as experts in documentaries and advertisements; the scientist as hero (Quincy) or as madman (as in much science fiction)
- the validity of scientific tests and principles used in advertisements (eg via the replication of scientific tests or experiments)
- the integration of popular programmes about science into the formal school curriculum. Drawing connections between scientific issues raised by the media and the scientific principles underlying them
- the exploration of the different philosophies of sciences implicit in, say, advertisements (science as verifiable fact) and documentaries (science as a fertile area of disagreement)
- the creative use of video and audio media by students to present ideas and areas of controversy within science

Social studies/peace education/political education

- comparison of media representations and images with information obtainable from other sources (eg images of race, gender, the elderly, crime etc)
- images of foreigners or "the enemy" in the popular media
- conflict resolution in media narratives
- basic media literacy for all students as part of personal/social education programmes
- the media and propaganda
- the part played by the media during elections (importance of photo-opportunities; pseudo-events; the packaging of politicians; presidential-style campaigning; techniques of media manipulation by politicians.)

Language and Literature

- the language of the media (the study of generic conventions; rhetorical devices; narrative forms etc in the popular media)
- writing material appropriate for media presentation (eg radio news stories; TV soap operas; TV documentary commentary etc)
- communicating via the audio-visual media
- similarities and differences between critical approaches to literature and the media
- techniques of persuasion in the media (eg in advertisements or politics)
- popular media adaptations of literary texts

PROPOSALS

1. The effective integration of popular media material into mainstream curriculum subjects is still relatively uncommon. Examples of excellent practice do exist in many subjects, however, and we recommend that case-studies of such practice be compiled and published by organisations with responsibility for media education or by the relevant professional subject associations.

2. There is an important precondition for the use of topical media texts across the curriculum. It cannot take place within a rigidly pre-planned syllabus, but is dependent upon more open and flexible approaches to the teaching of all subjects. We would like to see subject associations encouraging the kind of open teaching styles which would make it possible for teachers to use to the full the up-to-the-minute opportunities offered to them by the media.

4. The Impact of Popular Media on Teaching Methodology

Using popular media in the classroom will need to be accompanied by new ways of working and more participatory pedagogies if the potentialities of media materials are to be fully tapped. There are a number of reasons for suggesting this:

(a) If a key objective in using media materials is the development of critical autonomy then any pedagogy which makes students dependent upon the teacher will be counter-productive. For this reason teaching styles and methodologies will need to encourage students to take on responsibility for their own learning and thinking as quickly as possible. The classroom should be as non-authoritarian, non-threatening a place as the teacher can make it. Proceedings should be as lively, democratic, group-focussed and action-orientated as possible, for critical autonomy can only be achieved by gradually loosening pupils' dependency on teachers, and developing approaches which will nurture confidence in their own feelings, ideas and judgements.

(b) The nature of the media themselves encourage non-hierarchical teaching modes. The media, at their best, tend to communicate laterally, speaking across rather than down to their audiences. Teacher and student alike are equally and equal objects of address by the popular media. It is dangerous to break with this equality by establishing more hierarchical

modes. Many children and students are likely to resent it and see it as an infringement by the teacher and the school on something which is their own. They are unlikely to appreciate the prospect of having their own media experiences relayed back to them via the sensibilities, knowledge and experience of the teacher.

(c) As we have seen, recent research on media audiences has shown that meanings are produced not by texts themselves but by the interaction of texts and audiences. It is then scarcely tenable for us as teachers to pursue methodologies in which students are assumed to be little more than recipients of pre-formulated information and ideas. If we really do believe that students are makers of (and not simply receivers of) meaning, then we need to provide a classroom environment in which their meanings can be given the fullest expression.

(d) The pupil or student group is likely, in dealing with popular media forms, to have a wider range of cultural references and experiences at its disposal than any one teacher could have. In an important sense they, and not the teacher, are the experts, and the teacher's task is to tap as fully as possible the perceptions and insights which already exist within the group rather than to deposit information and ideas upon it.

PROPOSALS

1. We recommend that initial and in-service training courses for teachers generally encourage the recognition by all teachers of the crucial significance of teaching methodology and of "the hidden curriculum" within the learning process. In particular, methodology needs to be generally understood not primarily as a way of packaging content but as indivisible from what is really being learned.

2. Initial and in-service courses in media education in particular will need to encourage teachers to move away from a role in which they see themselves as accredited experts or the main sources of information for pupils and students and towards one in which they encourage more open collaborative and participatory modes of learning (via the use, for example, of simulations, projects, practical work, group discussion etc).

5. Linking the Worlds of Media and Education

If the fullest use is to be made of the media in the classroom then the development of co-operative links betweeen media and educational personnel and

institutions would be of great benefit. Unfortunately relationships between educational institutions and the media have all too frequently been characterised by mutual hostility and mistrust. Why is this?

(a) Many teachers see the media as threats to the cultural values of which they are the guardians. For their part journalists have tended to give more prominence to the inadequacies of educational institutions than to their achievements.

(b) Those who presume to teach <u>about</u> the media are often viewed with particular scepticism by media practitioners, as lacking first-hand experiences of the constraints under which media professionals work, of being unduly censorious and negative in their judgements on the media, and of being engaged in a form of moral protectionism against alleged media-excesses, particularly in the sphere of representations of sex and violence.

(c) For their part media teachers frequently characterise media practitioners as being unduly defensive in the face of legitimate criticism and of positing theoretically naive (ie transparent) models of their own working practices.

In the face of this unpromising situation we need to be precise about the benefits that would accrue to both parties if there were closer co-operation between media and educational professionals.

(a) <u>For teachers</u> co-operation would result in a much more up-to-date, and better informed media education practice. Few teachers have any kind of experience or training in the media, and need as much support, expertise and constructive help as they can muster from journalists and broadcasters if they are to ensure disciplined and professional standards in their work.

(b) <u>For media practitioners</u> collaboration in the development of media courses contributes to the sustenance of their own freedom as journalists or broadcasters through the creation of a public opinion which is articulate, knowledgable and well-informed on media issues. Without the existence of such an audience press and broadcasting freedom would quickly atrophy.

Working on media courses also gives media professionals direct access to an important segment of their present and future audiences. It is a

demonstration, too, of direct involvement by locally-based media in their local communities, an important factor in their credibility (and perhaps even their continued existence) as regionally-based media.

PROPOSAL

The Workshop recommended that the following modes of co-operation between media and educational professionals and institutions be given serious consideration by both sectors:

(a) secondments by teachers to media institutions,

(b) the inclusion of a media studies/research component in the training of all media professionals (as in Finland where the development of mass media research has been closely connected with the professional training of journalists).

(c) the establishment of Media Centres, or of institutions like CLEMI in Paris, which provide data and resource-bases, public screenings and exhibitions, educational and professional courses, and generally offer neutral territory where educationlists, media workers, researchers and members of the public can meet and discuss media issues.

(d) collaborative planning between media professionals, and media teachers and academics on broadcast series <u>about</u> the media.

(e) involvement of media professionals in the planning and evaluation, as well as the teaching, of media education courses.

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